

Soldier Hollow enters the fast track

U.S. cross-country competition is Games site's inaugural event

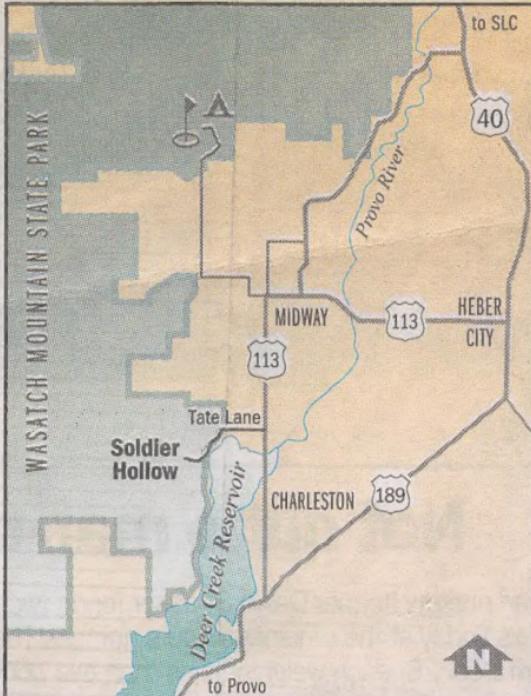
By Scott Taylor

1-16-00

Deseret News Olympics sports editor

SOLDIER HOLLOW — The dirt-road turnoff from Tate Lane between Midway and Charleston alternates randomly from washboards to mud puddles, and visitors drive past a well-weathered, crumbling barn and a sign petitioning for its survival. Parking lots and service roads are becoming bogs, thanks to the warm weather and snow runoff.

At the competition site, temporary trailers serve as the timing station and announcer's booth, while a general contractor's trailer doubles as the media center. Skiers race on what used to be livestock grazing pastures, and the winners'



podium is a makeshift stand of small sheets of wood stacked atop bales of hay.

Welcome to Soldier Hollow, the site of

this week's Chevy Truck U.S. Cross Country Championships. It's the inaugural event for Soldier Hollow, which in just two short years will double as the biathlon and cross-country venues for the 2002 Winter Olympics.

The Soldier Hollow site is one of the few 2002 venues still needing plenty of work. But Wasatch County has countered with a can-do spirit — or rather, a make-do spirit — with plenty of volunteers and staff to run this week's nationals. And the site already has benefited from prior efforts — the dead wood and brush cleared from the trails by more than 800 Boy Scouts and the miles of rusty barbed wire hauled out by schoolchildren and church groups.

Even as this week's cross-country nationals have been contested, the sounds of hammers and electrical saws have filled the air as construction workers build concrete forms for venue buildings just a stone's throw from the finish

Please see **SOLDIER** on A9

by a van last summer.

Simon & Schuster Inc. of New York announced Wednesday that it has extended a 1997 co-publishing agreement with King for three new works of fiction to be put out by Scribner in hardcover, Pocket Books in paperback and Simon & Schuster Audio.

King, 52, said in an announcement that he is "delighted" to know his future with the publisher is secure.

BIRTHDAYS

Saturday, Jan. 15

Physicist Edward Teller	92
Cardinal John J. O'Connor	80
Actress-singer Charo	49
Actor Mario Van Peebles	43
Actor Chad Lowe	32
Actress Regina King	29



REUTERS

Not quite man-eaters

Head nursery keeper Dawn Strasser feeds two baby Indochinese tigers Friday at the Cincinnati Zoo's nursery. The two tiger cubs were born Dec. 26, each weighing less than two pounds. They now weigh more than 5½ pounds each.

because of what he cholesterol and a heart disease in his family, in which a flexible tube inserted into an artery injected, revealed to

Dr. O. Wayne Isom performed the procedure at Presbyterian Hospital smoothly. He predicted recovery. "Dave has a chance of a 20-year-old,"

Rubenstein said.

Size of breast

WASHINGTON (AP) — Women with the earliest stages of breast cancer may have their breasts removed when doctors find a tiny tumor than older studies say. A new study that questions cosmetic concerns about women more at risk.

At issue is "ductal carcinoma in situ," a tumor that forms in the milk ducts in the breast.

SOLDIER

Continued from A1

line.

And for next month's U.S. Biathlon Championships at Soldier Hollow, officials will turn the metal bleachers and temporary trailers 180 degrees toward the biathlon trails' shooting range and finish line.

In the coming months, the venue is expected to transform into an elite competition site, with more national and international events scheduled leading up to the Olympics. Funding to build a world-class day lodge at the site is likely to come up before the Utah Legislature this session.

And even though Soldier Hollow is a far cry now from what it is to become, Nina Kempel and Marcus Nash — both Olympians, multi-event U.S. champions and members of the U.S. Ski Team — can't help but squint at the site and see a vision of what it will look like come February 2002.

Both know cross country is one of the most popular spectator sports in northern Europe, and both anticipate Soldier Hollow's 23 kilometers of trails to be lined with tens of thousands of fans — "probably mostly Norwegians and Swedes," says Kempel, adding that many will be in a festive, flag-waving, picnicking mode along the course.

In fact, the 29-year-old native of Anchorage, Alaska, and recent mainstay of the U.S. women's team, sounds like a would-be Midway Chamber of Commerce representative as she gushes about Soldier Hollow and its surrounding attractions: the Mount Timpanogos backdrop, neighboring Deer Creek Reservoir, the nearby Heber Creeper train and the rural Wasatch County setting.

"The Europeans will come here thinking it's the wild, wild West," she said with a chuckle. "They'll expect to see cowboys and Indians and all."

What Kempel, Nash and other U.S. skiers first saw when they came to Soldier Hollow this summer to train and run the course were sheep, cattle and plenty of rolling, grassy pastures.

"I knew then it was going to be challenging terrain," Nash said.

Most cross-country courses feature an abundance of woods and forests, but much of the Soldier Hollow course is free of visual obstacles and easily viewed by spectators. What Nash and Kempel hope the spectators see during the 2002 Olympics are U.S. and Canadian skiers enjoying a home-field advantage both on and off the course.

"I definitely feel like I'm getting an advantage already," said Nash, the 28-year-old University of Utah graduate from Fryeburg, Maine, who like everyone else was getting his first taste of Soldier Hollow skiing during the nationals.

First, having the Olympics in Utah means North American skiers will enjoy limited adjustments in travel, time zones, customs and cuisine. That's compared to competing on the World Cup circuit each year mostly at European sites.

Plus, the Americans and Canadians will be spending plenty of time racing and training on the Soldier Hollow trails in years to come — certainly a lot more frequently than their competitors from across the waters.

"Training and racing are different things," said Nash. "And the more you race the course, the more you learn."

Kempel agreed: "The Americans and Canadians will have skied this course so many times, we're going to know the trails so well."

She speaks from experience, having tumbled at a trail section called "The Whale's Tail" during Wednesday's race.

"I'll never make those same mistakes again," said Kempel, who passed the same point without a problem Thursday in her second-place finish in the women's 10-kilometer classical pursuit. "There are nuances on every course."

So, while Wasatch County and the Salt Lake Organizing Committee work on developing the Soldier Hollow site for the 2002 Games, U.S. skiers like Kempel and Nash are developing a personal feel for the trails and terrain of the Olympics course.

Both could result in quite an impressive showing in 2002.

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